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Witnessing Together

in JAPAN

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THE COUNTRY

If half the citizens of the United States were crowded into New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, we would face the same crowded condition that exists in Japan. Her present population of 85,000,000 exceeds that of any country in Europe outside of Soviet Russia, and she ranks sixth among the most populous countries of the world.

The Japanese are a sea-faring nation, turning to the ocean for their food supply and using it as their highways of shipping. In 1952 and 1953 Japan ranked second to Great Britain in the volume of shipbuilding. Her people must be supported by industry and commerce since in this mountainous country only sixteen percent of the land surface can be used to produce food crops.

The devastation of war and defeat has left in the minds of the people a deep distrust of war and armaments as a solution to their future problems. Amid the political tempests in the Orient today the Japanese people have displayed a sense of national unity which has contributed greatly to the stability of the nation. Her traditional religions are Buddhism and Shintoism, but in recent years Christianity has come to be recognized as one of the faiths of the people. The fact that in the postwar years the Japanese New Testament has been consistently the best seller and that 13,000,000 copies had been sold by the end of 1952 indicates that a considerable segment of the people are looking to Christianity for a personal faith.

THE CHURCH

The Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) was formed in 1941, partly as a result of government pressure and partly as a result of the steady efforts of laymen and clergymen who for many decades had been discussing and praying for church union. In the history of Christianity the occurrence of war has often divided churches. The formation of the Church in Japan is an instance when the pressure of war crystalized a long planned effort towards unity. This Church of Christ in Japan, with a membership of 130,000, comprises approximately seventy percent of the Protestant constituency in the nation.

Some thirty denominations with varying traditions originally formed the Church of Christ. Each of these participating denominations was a part of world-wide evangelical Protestantism and during the postwar years, by living together and working together in a common organization, they are in the process of forming a new living

SHARING A MUTUAL CONCERN HAS DEVELOPED A FELLOWSHIP WHICH CUTS ACROSS DENOMINATIONAL LINES

unit. During this period individuals and groups of congregations have withdrawn but the Church of Christ today is larger than it was when the war ended.

THE CHURCH'S OUTREACH

To be equipped for meeting the great Christian opportunity in postwar Japan, it was necessary first to rebuild the large number of church buildings which had been destroyed and to assist in the livelihood of impoverished laymen and clergymen. This program has now been completed and some 1,500 congregations with some 1,250 clergymen and evangelists have moved forward into a strong evangelistic program. The Kyodan, through its own Home Missions Board, plans to increase its evangelistic program in 1953 over that of 1952. The evangelistic missionaries cooperate very closely with the Church in an ever enlarging program of pioneer evangelism. The rate of church growth is considerably larger than that of the average Protestant denomination in North America.

Vocational evangelism carried on by the laymen of the Church is a fruitful and significant form of evangelism. Each layman brings to his church men and women of his own profession—Christian doctors seeking other doctors, Christian nurses winning other nurses, machinists drawing machinists, and thus these earnest laymen bring Christ to those with whom they associate daily.

Evangelistic lay workers get practical experience on the farm of the Hino Rural Training Center near Tokyo

Special afferings help pravide funds far the religious, educatianal, and sacial pragram af a large city church

Christianity is largely an urban religion in Japan and the church leaders are very conscious of their responsibility to win the village people to Christ. In this effort they have sought the assistance of missionaries and support from the North American churches. The goal of establishing one national and four regional training centers for rural evangelists, set five years ago, has now been achieved and the young men and women from the farms and villages who study the Bible, the fundamentals of Christian faith, and the programs for better rural life have now graduated from these institutions and are moving back to their own village communities. The number of rural churches in Japan has more than doubled in the last five years.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Japan is a country of high educational standards and the Christians in the country have for almost a hundred years worked in close association with the missionaries of the North American churches in establishing educational institutions. Related to the Kyodan are more than 700 kindergartens and nursery schools with over 25,000 children attending, and in addition there are forty schools ranging from high schools to universities providing a Christian education for almost 100,000 students. Among them are such institutions as the Oral School for the Deaf which provides a specialized education for handicapped children, the Rakuno Dairy College in snowy Hokkaido, with its Extension Department reaching into the villages of that northern island, and Tokyo Union Theological Seminary with its ecumenical emphasis. These Christian schools can be found in every major area of the country, and with the newly established International Christian Universiry, continue to make significant contributions to the life of the Church and the development of educated leadership for the nation.

YOUTH

It is the common observation of those who know the Kyodan that seventy-five to eighty percent present of those who attend church are below twenty-five years of age. Both the Church and the schools join with the missionary in a concerted effort to reach the heart of the youth of Japan. Each campus has its own Christian program and those churches are the strongest which join the school in reaching the young people. A missionary makes his greatest contribution through his contact with the earnest younger generation which has lost confidence in the traditional religion and seeks a faith to guide it in the harsh realities of an overcrowded country.

The younger members of the Church have joined in the youth caravans and work camps sponsored by the World Council of Churches, in which they have given free labor toward the rebuilding of their own churches, community hospitals, and com-

Their first classroom was an old factory, but now they ore in o fine new school

munity playgrounds. They soon discovered the truth of the testimony of one participant who wrote after a few days of hard work, "I do not find a work camp at all romantic." However, they persevered and came to find an inspiring fellowship and a new release of spiritual power through their group service. Youth caravans have been enthusiastically welcomed as they have moved into remote districts and held Christian meetings in village dwellings and Buddhist temples.

SOCIAL SERVICE

There are some forty orphanages, widows' homes, community centers and social service centers established by members of the Kyodan or by missionaries. Because

the orphanages are usually small they have been able to provide the atmosphere of true Christian homes for the children under their care. Day nurseries have been opened to help a large number of women employed in factories and offices, thus relieving them of anxiety when they leave their children in the care of Christian women. The members of the Woman's Society of one church in a small town take responsibility in turn for a well-organized day nursery which is a part of its regular program.

Homes have been provided for some widows and various centers of Christian social service have given them training which will help them to become self-supporting. The homes for old people are few and very simple according to Occidental standards but the gratitude and sense of security of the inmates are reflected in their peaceful, happy faces.

Some of Japan's many war orphans are cared for in Christian orphanages

THE INTERBOARD COMMITTEE

Working in very close cooperation with the Church of Christ in Japan are the foreign mission agencies of these North American churches:

CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST
(United Christian Missionary Society)
EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED
EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN
THE METHODIST CHURCH
PRESBYTERIAN IN THE U.S.A.
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

These churches support the program with one budget in which each takes a designated share. The missionaries supported by these churches have found new

A visiting nurse from a Christian social center instructs a mother in the preparation of food for her baby

resources for leadership through this close association in a common enterprise. Sharing a mutual concern has developed a fellowship which cuts across denominational lines. A missionary couple of the Evangelical and Reformed Church taught in a school with Congregational Christian affiliations and when they left, two Methodist missionaries took their place; another school traditionally associated with the same Board has had the benefit of the services of a young man appointed by the Reformed Church in America; a woman missionary of the United Church of Canada now works in a section of Hokkaido long recognized as an area of special concern for the Methodist Church; a nurse of the Disciples Church is assigned to a hospital where there is no precedent for the presence of any missionary of her Church; a Presbyterian residence is built upon Evangelical United Brethren land.

There is still a sense of adventure in the organization of the relationship of missionaries to the Kyodan. Missionaries of the Interboard Committee for Christian Work in Japan are united in work under the direct supervision of the Church without any mission organizations. Naturally problems arise and sometimes both Japanese and missionaries are puzzled by them. As the younger missionaries are gradually being assigned to permanent places of service, they are being given opportunity to demonstrate the working of this new plan. The experience of many of them indicates a deepening of the ties between missionaries and Japanese pastors and a development in understanding of the work of the Church as a common project in which both Westerners and Japanese have a part.

The Church of Christ in Japan needs and desires the help of North American Christians. The Church of Christ reaches out for ecumenical fellowship. The Churches of the Interboard Committee have the privilege of responding to this call for help and brotherhood.

The Interboard Committee

FOR CHRISTIAN WORK IN JAPAN

Member Agencies

Representing the Congregational Christian Churches:
AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS
14 Beacon Street
Boston 8, Massachusetts

Representing the Churches of the Disciples of Christ:
UNITED CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
222 Downey Avenue
Indianapolis 7, Indiana

THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH:
Board of International Missions
1505 Race Street
Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania

THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH:
Department of World Missions
1409 Knott Building
Dayton 2, Ohio

THE METHODIST CHURCH, BOARD OF MISSIONS AND CHURCH EXTENSION:
Division of World Missions
150 Fifth Avenue
New York 11, New York

Woman's Division of Christian Service
150 Fifth Avenue
New York 11, New York

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.:
Board of Foreign Missions
156 Fifth Avenue
New York 10, New York

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA:
Board of Foreign Missions
156 Fifth Avenue
New York 10, New York

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA:
Board of Overseas Missions
299 Queen Street West
Toronto 2 B, Canada

Woman's Missionary Society
412 Wesley Building
Toronto 2 B, Canada

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Printed in the U.S.A.